

LESSON 3: CONVERTING COLOR IMAGES TO BLACK AND WHITE

There are many ways to convert a color image to black and white. Here are six that may help you achieve a good image.

Grayscale – The fastest and easiest way, but not necessarily the best way, to convert an image to black and white is to go to IMAGE> MODE>GRAY SCALE. When the dialogue box comes up asking you if you want to discard color info you click OK.

Then go to IMAGE>ADJUSTMENTS>LEVELS and alter the levels until you get something you like. You can then go to IMAGE>ADJUSTMENTS> BRIGHTNESS/CONTRAST and do further adjusting to add “Punch” to your image.

Channels – Go to the channels dialogue box and click on the red, blue and green channels to determine which one would make a better black and white. When you pick one, go to IMAGE>MODE>GRAYSCALE. A dialogue box will come up asking if you want to discard the other channels. Click OK. Use LEVELS and/or BRIGHTNESS/CONTRAST to finely tune your image.

Channel Mixer – Go to IMAGE>ADJUSTMENTS>CHANNEL MIXER. Click box in lower left corner {Monochrome}. Adjust sliders to get image you want. Click OK. Go to IMAGE>MODE>GRAYSCALE. Adjust LEVELS or BRIGHTNESS/ CONTRAST or both.

Desaturate – Go to IMAGE>ADJUST>DESATURATE. To achieve a sepia type toning, go to IMAGE>ADJUST>COLOR BALANCE. Add magenta and yellow to get a sepia tone that you like. You can do this because you are still in RGB mode. You have not discarded the color as you would if you converted to grayscale.

Lab Color – Go to IMAGE>MODE>LAB COLOR. Go to CHANNELS dialogue box. Click on lightness channel. Go to IMAGE>MODE>GRAYSCALE. Then adjust brightness and contrast and levels as before. This method generally gives you a nice clean black and white image. It is my new favorite method of getting a good black and white.

Russell Brown’s Method - Russell Brown. Adapted from The Photoshop Show—Starring Russell Brown to be published by Adobe Press and Peachpit Press. Russell Preston Brown is a Sr. Creative Director at Adobe Systems, Inc. He has worked with Adobe Photoshop since its introduction, over 12 years ago. Visit Russell’s Web site at <http://www.russellbrown.com/>

“I have always wanted an easy, interactive way, to adjust the relationship between the tonal values when converting the image. This technique makes it easy to convert, and adjust images, without taking a lot of complex selections....

1. With the file open you’d like to convert, create a new adjustment layer by going to Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation. At this time, don’t do anything to the settings, simply click OK. This will create an adjustment layer without altering or harming the original image.
2. Create a second adjustment layer in the same way as step 1, Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation. Yes, we’re creating a second Hue/Saturation adjustment layer. Set the Saturation to – 100 to desaturate the image completely. Then click OK. By the way, this second adjustment layer can also be done with Channel Mixer for more sophisticated results. Select the Monochrome check box and adjust the sliders if necessary. Then click OK. I like using Hue/Saturation because it is just plain easy.

3. Target the first Hue/Saturation adjustment layer (Hue/Saturation 1) you created by clicking on the layer in the Layers palette. This will highlight the layer. Then change the blending mode for the layer to Color.

4. Double-click on the Layer thumbnail for Hue/Saturation 1 layer to bring up the adjustment dialog box. That's the beauty of adjustment layers. You can double-click on these at any time to change your adjustments. Because this adjustment layer was set to a Color mode, we can adjust its Hue and Saturation. Move the Hue slider to adjust the grayscale values of the image. Find a setting you like for the image you're working on.

5. Move the Saturation slider to get a little more finesse out of those particular shades that you've chosen.

Use Hue for the broader range of adjustments, Saturations for the smaller adjustments.

To target a range of color, click on the Edit menu and select the range of colors you'd like to edit, for example, Red. This will adjust just the color red, not anything else. Then move the Hue and Saturations sliders as in steps 4 and 5. Notice how only the Reds in the image are changing. Is this control or what!

Adjust another color range.

To adjust just the greens, select Greens from the Edit menu. Move the Hue and Saturation sliders.

Tip: To see the adjustment in color, turn off visibility of the Hue/Saturation 2 layer.

How to adjust a group of colors.

To select a group of colors to adjust, select the Eyedropper tool, place your cursor on the image, and hold down the Shift key. A plus sign will appear next to the Eyedropper tool. Click on one color, then another (for example blue and red). Notice how the range at the bottom of the Hue/Saturation dialog box has increased to include the selected group of colors to adjust. Then move the

Hue and Saturations sliders.

Finish making the adjustments.

When you've finished making your adjustments, click OK. Remember, the beauty of adjustment layers is that you can always go back and change your adjustment without altering the original image.

Conclusion.

So there you have it—the incredible, spectacular Russell Brown technique for converting color images to black and white. Amazing, but true!" This method is very good when you want to differentiate between tones, such as green and red.